

1 THE MARATHON

No other event evokes the spirit of both the ancient and modern games quite like the Marathon. Gruelling and punishing, this is the race to watch – all 26 miles and 385 yards of it (42.195 km). To make it even more epic, the final 300 yards are in the Olympic Stadium. By the way, the world record has dipped in under the 2 hour 4 minute mark. Can it be lowered further?



WATCH >> Ryan Hall (left). How the Americans would love to be in the shake-up in this event. And Hall might just be the man to do it. The laid-back, shaggy-cropped Californian has managed a sub-2 hour 5 minute time.

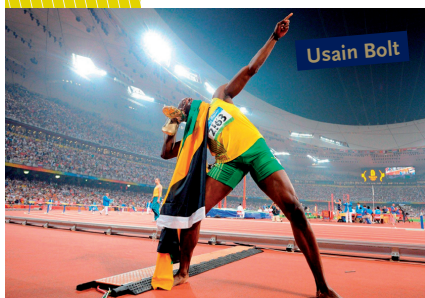


WATCH >> Women's world record holder, Paula Radcliffe (left). She'll be looking to triumph on home territory. Now 38, she'd dearly love to add the one medal that has eluded her to date.

IRISH INTEREST >> Mark Kenneally; Linda Byrne; Ava Hutchinson; Maria McCambridge; Catriona Jennings

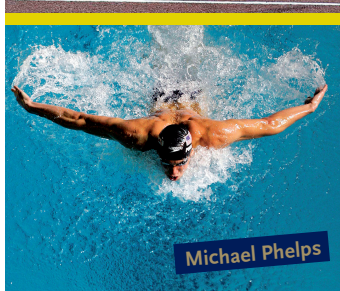
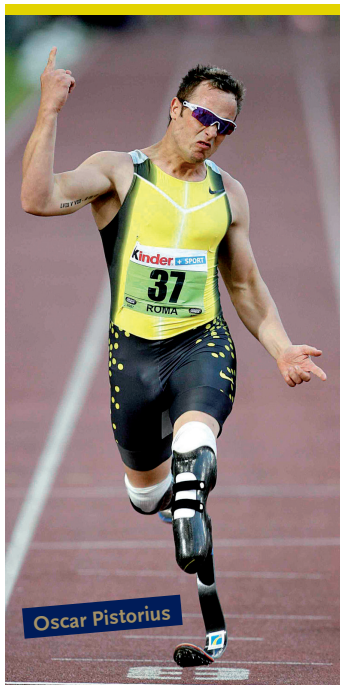
2 TRACK & FIELD

WATCH >> Usain Bolt. He's simply the fastest man on the planet over 100m and 200m. And the supernatural Jamaican sprinter has the ego to match his talent. Word is he's



peaking for London, which means world records – already untouchable by anyone else – are his to toy with. If Bolt trips or even stubs his toe, his rocketing country man, Yohan Blake, will be next in line.

WATCH >> Oscar Pistorius. Known as 'Blade Runner', the South African double-amputee does indeed run on carbon-fiber blades. Looking to become the first Paralympian to compete in the Olympics, he's bound to make headlines whatever his time and placement.



WATCH >> David Gillick. Double European indoor 400m champion (2005 & 2007), Gillick will be gunning for a medal in London. As consistent as he is fast, the Dubliner is certainly one to watch out for.

IRISH INTEREST >> Derval O'Rourke (100m Hurdles); **Paul Hession** (200m); **Joanne Cuddihy** (400m); **Ciaran O'Lionaird** (1500m); **Alistair Cragg** (5000m); **Deirdre Ryan** (High Jump); **Tori Pena** (Pole Vault); **Stephanie O'Reilly** (3000m Steeplechase); **Fionnuala Britton** (3000m Steeplechase); **Rob Heffernan** (Race Walk); **Colin Griffin** (Race Walk); **Brendan Boyce** (Race Walk); **Olive Loughnane** (Race Walk); **Aileen Morrison** (Triathlon)

3 SWIMMING

WATCH >> Michael Phelps. The man who could become the most decorated Olympian of all time, in any sport, is back for more. And he wants at least three medals, of any colour, to re-write the history books. Having collected eight golds in the Beijing Games, Phelps, by his own admission had lost some of his hunger. But the appetite's back now. His main rival will be his own US teammate, **Ryan Lochte**, who's no pretender – he picked up five golds last year at the World Championships.

WATCH >> Grainne Murphy. Two years ago, as a school girl, Murphy beat Olympic and World champions on her way to toppling the Irish 800m freestyle record by 8 seconds, in European competition.

IRISH INTEREST >> Barry Murphy (100m Breast Stroke); **Syckerika McMahon** (100m Breaststroke); **Melanie Nocher** (200m Backstroke)

4 CYCLING: TRACK & ROAD

WATCH >> Chris Hoy (Track). The Scot with oak-tree thighs had a haul of three golds in Beijing. And the host nation will be looking to Sir Chris (knighted in 2009) to become Britain's most medalled Olympian. A couple of podium finishes would see him eclipse Steve Redgrave's record. Look out for him in the Keirin, team and individual sprints.

WATCH >> Victoria Pendleton (Track). She's just enjoyed a brilliant spring preparation by amassing records and medals at the Track World Championships in Melbourne. She'll be challenging on three fronts in London, and wowing the camera men with her

stunning... smile.

WATCH >> Mark Cavendish (Track). The Manxman is the strongest sprinter in the world. A prolific stage winner in the grand tours and current World Road Race champion, Cavendish will have to rely on his instincts in the Olympics, as the use of radios is not allowed. Expect some tumbles.